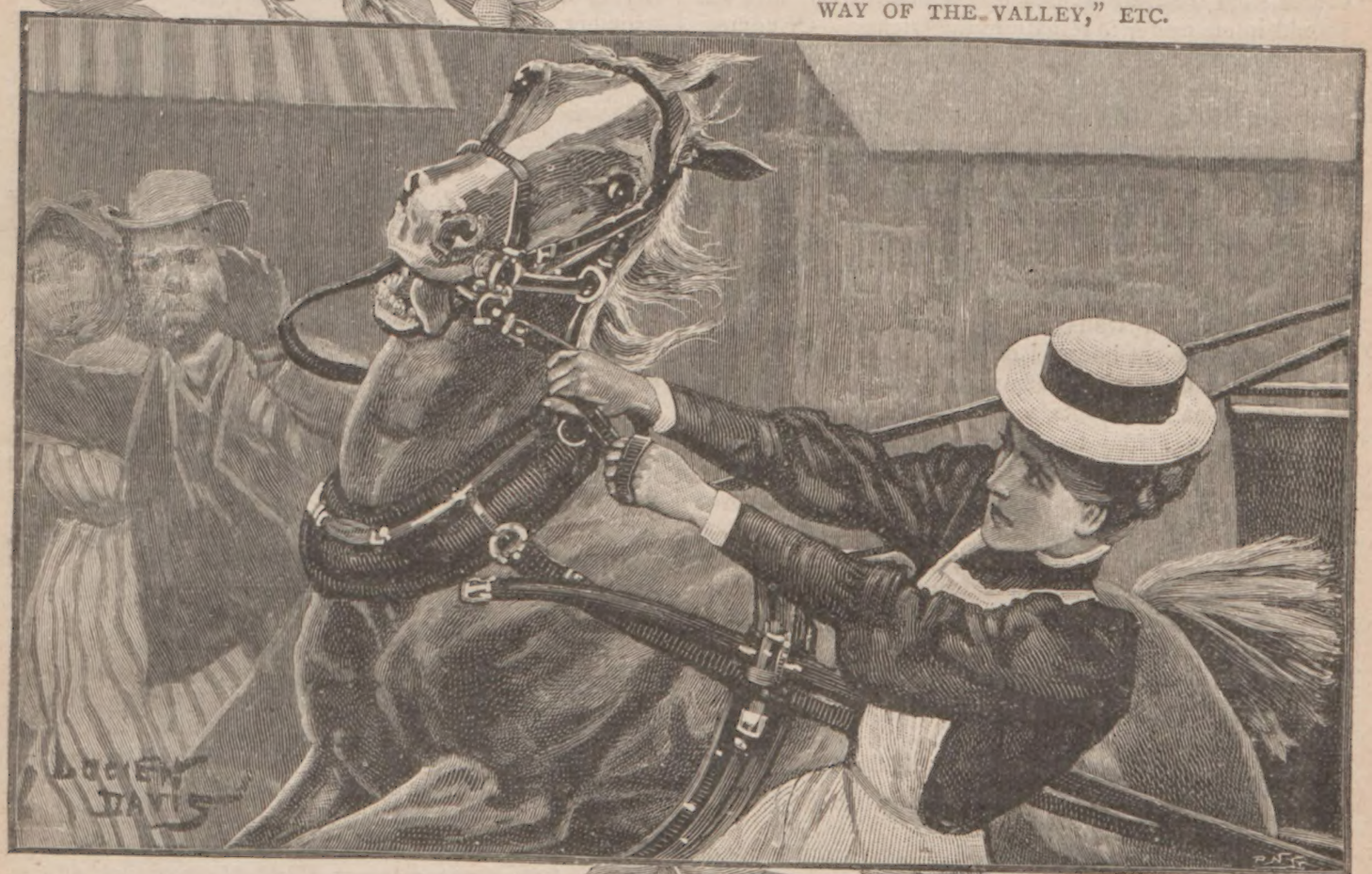
Mistress of the Situation.

BY JENNIE CHAPPELL, AUTHOR OF "BY THE WAY OF THE VALLEY," ETC.



"Hanging on to the bridle." *p.* 20.

CHAPTER III.

"SHE WHO MUST BE OBEYED."

IT was like a calm succeeding a storm, the period of halcyon rest that we enjoyed for the first week or two after the accession of Mary Ray. I use the word *accession* advisedly; for, looking back with the enlightened and dispassioned gaze of memory, I am bound to confess that our lady-help had not been with us many days before she, to all intents and purposes, ruled the house. I never let Edith know this, and it was long before she found it out. But it came about quite naturally, for the simple reason that Mary seemed to know best about everything.

Each day and hour had its appointed duty, and the routine was punctually adhered to. This was not difficult, of course, in a quiet family like ours, where there were no children, and nothing unexpected occurred from one week's end to the other. But had Mary interested herself chiefly in snatching ten minutes' gossips with the baker or milkman, or servant next door, or kept a penny novelette in her pocket to pull out the moment she was left alone, it could not have been done.

Instead of such service as this, however, our new maid devoted herself absolutely and entirely to making and keeping our house in perfect order, and she seemed to have no thought beyond. It was almost too good to be true, and I felt a sort of conviction from the first that it would not last.

"I say, Sissie!" was Keith's comment, the first time she flashed into the room and out again—with a letter, as it happened—when he was present.

But what he "said," remained unsaid, at least by his lips, though his eyes sought mine with a dozen notes of admiration and interrogation dancing in them at once. And well they might! For when dressed for the afternoon, Mary Ray was a picture. The pointed cap above her finely-cut features and lovely dark hair, her pretty white apron and Puritan-like collar and cuffs over a perfectly fitting black dress, called up suggestions of Marie Stuart and Evangeline, and fancy dress for bazaars, rather than that of a general servant "put tidy" for the day. Of course, our own maids in the old home had been similarly attired, but they never looked like that.

"Isn't it usual," asked our father, on the second evening that Mary was with us, "to treat a lady-help as one of the family, and have her to sit with you when the work is done, and all that?"

"I think so," said Edith, "and that is what we

expected. But when I told Miss Ray that she would be at liberty to bring her mending-basket into the parlour after the tea-things were cleared away—provided, of course, that we were alone—she replied, stiffly, that she should much prefer to remain in the kitchen. Of course, I shall not trouble her with a second invitation."

"Rather an original character, I should think," observed Keith, with unmistakable approbation.

"Her manners are decidedly original for a person in her position," replied Edith. "I must say I rather anticipate breakers ahead."

So did I, though not from the same cause.

What would have happened had my dignified sister been present at one or two of the episodes that took place within our walls before Mary Ray had been resident forty-eight hours, I dare not imagine.

It was my brother's self-imposed task to fill the coal-vases and clean the boots, while Mrs. Bell was engaged to come every Friday to "do" the kitchener.

The first Friday after Mary's arrival, Mrs. Bell, as frequently occurred, was so late that we feared she was not coming. This, as our help did not need informing, meant dull fires and ill-cooked dinners for another week. Soon after breakfast I found her down on her knees before the grate, enveloped in a large, coarse apron, her head bound up in a duster, her hands encased in a fairly good pair of driving gloves—the latter given her for such purposes, no doubt, by Mrs. Jonesmith.

"Oh, dear!" I gasped, rather blankly, for I should almost as soon have expected a lady to sweep the chimney.

"What's the matter?" asked Mary, turning round upon me in the open-eyed way peculiar to her.

"That is not fit work for you!"

"Is that all? I thought something had happened."

"It didn't matter, really!" I said. "Perhaps Mrs. Bell will come to-morrow. It seems such a pity——"

"For you to get smothered in soot!" finished Miss Ray. "So I think. Would you mind going out of the room and shutting the door behind you?"

"But, really, don't do that horrid dirty job, Mary," I persisted. "I don't like you to."

"Would you be so kind as to leave the kitchen?" reiterated our "help," with the air of a "She-who-must-be-obeyed." "I can't get on while you are here, and you are hindering me dreadfully."

It may be an evidence of weakness of mind, but I obediently retired.

This episode might have warned me as to the uselessness of attempting a conflict with our lady-help. But half an hour later we were in collision again, and that time it was decided once and for good which of us was to be mistress.

The bone of contention was the parlour coal-scuttle, which Keith, for once, had forgotten.

Finding myself running short of fuel, I took the scoop in one hand, and a piece of soft paper in the other, and went to the cellar, intending to pick up a few lumps with fingers and paper, and convey a scoop-load upstairs. Of course, I was detected.

"What are you doing?" sharply inquired our maid.

I apologetically confessed.

"That's *my* work. Why didn't you ring for me?" demanded Miss Ray. "I shall fill the coal-scuttle."

I glanced at her slight figure, firm and erect indeed, but far more fragile in appearance than my own, and at her small white wrists. While my eye was passing over her, she turned away and ran up to the parlour, returning with the coal-vase in her hand.

"No, don't!" I said, hastily. "You are no more fit for such work as that than I. I can manage very well until my brother comes back. Please don't. You will hurt yourself!"

Mary Ray set down the scuttle and confronted me with a look in her eyes and mouth that somehow made me feel very small.

"Now, listen to me, please, Miss Sissie Alden," she said. "I have undertaken certain duties, and I am going to fulfil them. If you worry me and interfere with me so that I can't, I shall throw the whole thing up. So I warn you. *Verbum sap.!*"

And she straightway disappeared, scuttle in hand, down the cellar stairs, leaving me uncertain whether to wonder most at her audacity, her Latin, or my own preternatural meekness.

Sunday came, and with it Edric Moore. He joined us on our way back from church, and we all went home together.

Mary opened the door to us. She had on a finer muslin apron than usual, and it was prettily frilled with delicate lace, while dainty bows of white ribbon softened the severe simplicity of the plain linen at neck and wrists. She looked positively lovely. I know Keith thought so, for he seemed scarcely able to take his eyes off her, either then or later, when she was waiting at table. But there was someone else of apparently much the same mind. I shall never forget Edric Moore's look of surprise as his gaze rested upon her, and I was sorry for at least three people's sake to notice that her frank eyes fell and her cheek flushed beneath his admiring glance as they had not yet done before my brother's. "Oh, dear!" I thought, "is this going to be the beginning of a wretched tangle?"

But worse was to follow, even on that very same day.

We all returned from evening service in torrents of rain, and our streaming umbrellas were taken from our hands at the door by Mary, and carried out to the kitchen sink.

A couple of hours later, after supper, a glorious full moon was flooding the wet streets with silver, and Keith proposed that we young folk should accompany Edric part of the way home. This, I knew, was expressly to give our visitor and Edith a chance of half an hour in each other's society, and quite understood that he and I should walk together at least twenty paces in front of them. Edith, however, in her maiden coyness, passed out of the door at our brother's side, while I lingered a moment to find a magazine for father to read while we were away.

While I was seeing about that, Edric Moore hurried back to say he was taking away the wrong umbrella, and as he told me this, I standing at the parlour door, Mary came from the kitchen with Mr. Moore's own property in her hand.

Edric went forward to take it from her, and they met mid-way in the passage. I am not given to suspecting or fancying things, but I am sure that something

passed between them then which had nothing whatever to do with the umbrella. I am certain there were some hurried words; I know I saw the flash and sparkle of laughter, only half-suppressed, quivering over Mary's face as she quickly turned away, and I *thought* I heard her whisper "Hush-sh!"

But what grieved me most of all was to perceive Edith's face, white and angry, at the front gate. The hall door was wide open, and I knew that she had seen as much as I.

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CHAPTER IV.

MY HEROINE.

THERE is no denying that I grew fonder of Mary Ray day by day, until before she had been under our roof a month, I really loved her with that romantic sort of affection to which girls who have never tasted what more experienced persons call "the real thing" are especially liable.

She was such a delightful mixture of imperiousness and winsomeness, dignity and humility. Besides which, I soon discovered that she possessed a mind equal to her will, and that she was quite as well educated as Edith or myself; not to speak of an amount of shrewd common-sense which placed her in many respects far beyond either of us.

I gave her her own way in everything. Not merely because she took it, but really because I generally saw that it was the wisest and best. By following her advice, for example, as to the expenditure of my housekeeping money, and the economising of many articles in daily use, I was speedily able to notice quite a difference in the purchasing power of every half-crown; while Mary's clever notions as to the utilising of all sorts of odds and ends of food—too often, in the past, tossed over the wall to the well-fed dog next door—reduced our expenses in that line appreciably.

During the earlier days of our acquaintance I often tried to find out how and where she had been brought up, to have learned so many useful things of which I was totally ignorant. But I found that in this direction it was a distinct case of "No thoroughfare." Not a shred of information would she permit me to extract. The moment I approached the subject her mouth would take on the form of a straight line, and I would retire discomfited.

Edith by no means shared in my enthusiasm as to our lady-help. She could not but own that Mary was by far the best and most capable maid we had ever had, but she did not like her. It was a certain indefinable something about Miss Ray's manner towards her—a sort of punctiliously respectful *hauteur*, if such a thing could be; quite different from the almost affectionate comradeship which, during the many hours that we were alone together, had grown up between my help and me—that Edith usually mentioned as the cause of her disfavour. But she also spoke frequently, and with obvious suspicion, of Mary's extreme reserve respecting her antecedents. I know, however, that she never forgot that slight episode which occurred in connection with Mr. Moore's umbrella, on the very first Sunday of Mary's sojourn with us.

I did not forget it either, though I sometimes wished I could; for it made me involuntarily notice little things when Edric was our guest, which I am sure I should otherwise have never seen. I tried hard to believe that the telegraphic signs which seemed sometimes to flash between Mary's eyes and his existed only in my own imagination. I loved and admired, and already trusted her so much that it was pain to me to think it possible that she could respond in the slightest degree to the admiration of one who was visiting the house under such circumstances as Mr. Moore. Once, indeed, their hands met in such a way, as she handed him a magazine he had asked to see, that I could have declared a scrap of folded paper passed between them! The action was not observed by anyone else, fortunately, and I—well, I *would* not perceive it. Mary was the soul of honour and candour—at least, except concerning her own life-history, which was really no business of ours—and it was my duty to believe myself mistaken. Besides, I felt sure from a word or two she let fall now and then, as well as from the kind of books with which she had furnished her bedroom shelf, that she was a good girl—I mean a downright Christian girl—as well; so it would have been positively wrong in me to allow myself to harbour the slightest suspicion.

How much Edith herself noticed, or fancied, I could not discover. She became more and more reticent as regarded Edric, while she grew increasingly unsympathetic towards my friendship with our lady-help. As to poor old Keith, I don't think he had eyes for anything but Mary's own cleverness and beauty. Daddy, bless him! lived among his books. Thus, then, were we relatively situated, when, about eight or nine weeks after Mary's appearance among us, something happened.

It was on a Friday evening, when Mary and I generally did our marketing for Saturday. Edith greatly objected to my custom of accompanying "the servant," as she had lately got into the habit of calling her, on these expeditions, considering it derogatory to my dignity. But I thought otherwise, and felt it was only fair to help Mary carry home such parcels as it was not convenient to leave to be sent. Besides, I obtained in this way many a valuable hint as to the selection of various articles of food, for Mary was an excellent judge of fish, flesh, poultry, and vegetables.

We were threading our way as well as we could along the busy High Street, discussing Mrs. Browning's sonnets and looking out for good cooking apples at the same time, when Mary's attention was suddenly drawn to a light trap to which was harnessed a pretty pony, driven by a woman in fashionable attire. The animal seemed inclined to be troublesome.

"What a lovely little creature!" exclaimed Mary. "I'm so fond of that shade of strawberry-roan. But what an idiot that woman is! She'll ruin its mouth for a certainty if she tugs at it like that. And that detestable bearing-rein, too! Now she's going to whip it, the brute!"

"I don't think she knows how to manage the creature," said I, marvelling at Mary's ready grasp of the position; she evidently understood horses.

"Manage!" echoed Mary, in a tone of the deepest contempt. She was standing still, as were also one or two other persons, to watch the upshot of the scene. Her cheeks were crimson, her eyes dark and blazing with

righteous anger. "If the animal bolt and that——"

But the scathing epithet was never uttered. The word "bolt" had scarcely left Mary's lips, when the exasperated creature started off at a terrific pace, tearing past the corner where we stood.

Then followed a few seconds of the wildest confusion. I never realised that Mary had left my side until I saw her slight form hanging on to the bridle of the rearing pony. The next instant a crowd had closed round them, and she had disappeared.

I rushed forward, and forced my way, I scarcely knew how, to the centre of the group. Two men were now holding and soothing the quivering animal, one on either side. The woman had alighted and stood by, looking pale, angry, and ashamed. My Mary—my heroine!—lay white and still and beautiful as marble, with her head supported by a policeman's knee.

"She's killed!" "No, only stunned!" "It was a kick as did it!" "She fell, and hit her head agin the curb!" "She saved the whole concern, anyhow. Another minute, and it would have dashed clean into that tram at the bottom."

I heard these voices around me as in a dream. I was possessed with but one idea—to lift Mary up in my own arms, and carry her home!

How we did get her back to our house I scarcely remember. The next vivid recollection of that horrible night was seeing Mary's dark eyes unclose at last as she lay upon the bed, and her white lips move.

I hung over her to catch the almost inaudible word—thank heaven it *was* inaudible to all but me!—it was "*Edric!*"

Poor Keith was waiting at the foot of the stairs, with a woeful countenance.

"Oh, Sissie!" he gasped, when I went down, "how is she? Tell me truly. Will she—will she die?"

But I could not answer him.

(*To be continued.*)

THE LITTLE WHITE HAND.

IT was the beckoning of a little white hand through prison bars which led to one of the most blessed reforms known in this age of Christian philanthropy. Mr. W. F. M. Rounds, whose name is associated with wise methods of reforming boy criminals in America, had been speaking to the men in a certain prison on a Sabbath afternoon. As he was about to leave he saw a thin hand stretched through the grating, and heard a child's voice say: "Oh, sir, you've been telling what you do for the men; don't you do nothing for the boys?" The pleading question rang on like the stirring sound of a signal bell, until the Christian Industrial Training Home for boys was established at Canaan Four Corners, New York.

But it is not of the beneficent results of this work that I wish to write. That "little white hand" has been saying significant things to me ever since I read the story. The boys, the boys—ay, and the girls! what shall we do for them? How shall we win them and keep them for Christ? There are little white hands in every household, every school, every Sunday School, beckoning to us older Christians to be their example, their counsellor, their helper, and their guide. They are not behind prison bars now. They are free to be guided and helped. But they will not be free very long. Habit, society, the customs and maxims of man, the spirit of the world, are weaving chains that will hold them from us before we are aware.

Many a mother would give all she possesses to have the hand of her boy free once more to be held within her own and wisely led as she desires. The little ones grow out of babyhood so soon! Their school days are like the thoughts of a dream. We can scarcely believe it, but the baby of yesterday is the man of to-day, thinking for himself, choosing his own path. We cannot influence him now except by the secret power which reaches back to the days when the little hands lay confidingly in ours.

Oh, the value of those days when "what mother says," or "father does," is just right in the eyes of the children! What a sin against innocence it is to talk of matters in their presence which they ought not to hear! What a shame to set them the example of ill-temper, impatience, or any other unlovely thing! It is a vain delusion to think that we will begin teaching and training later on. We must heed the beckoning of the tiny baby hand if we would hold firmly the hand which carries the strength of three or five years in its grasp.

If I could have the ear of every mother, I would say, Do not be deceived; do not think any work or any social engagement can rank in importance with your own teaching and companionship with your children. Not that you should be a slave to their preferences and conveniences. That would be a most unkind training in selfishness for them. But make them feel that you are their friend in everything that interests them, and that home is the sweetest and brightest place on earth. What the little ones see and hear is a constant astonishment. They take in sentiments from our words and actions which they never forget, when we think they are not observing us at all. Happy are the children who grow like lilies in the sunshine, in an atmosphere of Christian refinement, where consistent living and wholesome speech are the habits of the household. O. M.

Only a Smile.—I was seated at the parlour window with my afternoon's sewing, leaving the two children playing happily in the garden. Suddenly the pleasant babble and merry laughter changed into angry words, culminating in a piteous wail; and little Robbie came running into the room, throwing himself into my lap with convulsive sobs. His older sister, Ruth, who had followed, stood a little apart with a sullen, hard expression on her young face. "Children, what is it?" I asked, looking from one to the other.

"She—she won't laugh!" faltered Robbie between his sobs.

"He's such a silly little fellow!" explained Ruth, scornfully. "How can I laugh every time he wants me to?"

"Well, if she can't laugh, she can *smile*, can't she, mamma?" said the child, with a wisdom of which he did not dream. H.

Waiting at the Gates of Temptation for the Sunday Beer.

THE CHILD TRIBUTE TO BACCHUS.

WE hear much of the sorrows and sins of London—of the bitter cry of its outcast poor; but surely above all the cries for succour in the great city arises that of the drunkard's children. Helpless, starved, neglected, the lot of these "little ones" is indeed terrible. In the olden time, the child sacrifice to grim Moloch meant passing through fierce fires, but who will deny that the slower process of starvation and neglect which the child tribute to Bacchus now exacts, is not even more cruel?

It is possible that my reader may think these words exaggerated and unreal. Perhaps her only experience of Drink's mischief to the children has been gained from a passing glance at the boys and girls congregated about the door of a gin-palace on Sunday before opening-time—a sight sad enough. But the child sacrifice to Bacchus is a far, far deeper evil even than this, and to test if it

be not so, let me ask you to accompany me on a short tour of inquiry about—say, the East End of London. Let us go personally and on foot, seeing with our own eyes what the children actually suffer. I have often done so, and the scenes I have witnessed are engraved deep in my memory.

For our purpose we may choose a Saturday evening in February, foggy, chilling, intensely damp, as only winter in London can be. During the past few days snow has fallen, and the streets have become filled with a black, freezing slush, which penetrates the most warmly shod. We will take some busy, populous thoroughfare, where the public-house has been thickly planted, regardless of its blighting influence.

Here is at once a sight we may well stop and gaze on, even though our hearts bleed while we contemplate it. Before us is the entrance to a gaudy gin-palace. The wide vestibule is gorgeous with polished mahogany, mosaic pavement, coloured tiles, and plate glass. But what are those pitiable objects on its steps, so strangely out of keeping with the place? They are two poor bairns, tribute to Bacchus, the god of strong drink. There they sit, huddled together for warmth. Their clothing is of the scantiest; their worn-out, ill-fitting boots cannot keep out the biting cold. Their faces and hands are blue and half frozen; their tiny forms shivering. They are waiting for their parents, who are engaged in drinking and loud talking in one of the compartments of the tavern. It is more than they dare do to go inside—they must wait till the degraded pair choose to leave. Presently, at the sound of a swing door, the little ones get up hurriedly, and recognise by a keen glance that "father" and "mother" are at last going homewards. Both are warmed and exhilarated by alcohol, but are blind to the miseries of the hungry, cold-nipped mites who trudge behind them—to a miserable hovel without fire or proper food.

Not a score of yards ahead, on the other side of the road, is another "house"—a beer-shop. If we glance across we shall see that a "row" is in process about the door. It is half open, and a man in his shirt sleeves is pushing into the street a dirty, half-drunken, elderly man. He is not quite intoxicated, but terribly bad-tempered and quarrelsome. A poor boy of about twelve is standing by, watching everything with closest interest, yet afraid to interfere. The wretched tippler is evidently the boy's father, for the little lad takes the man's hand and endeavours to lead him. It may be that the mother is at home ill; perhaps she is dead. At any rate, the child is trying to act the part of guide and counsellor to the besotted parent. Keeping them in sight, you will notice that the boy succeeds for a time, till his charge becomes cantankerous, then thoroughly quarrelsome, when in an evil moment the man flings off the restraining hand and deals his child a vicious blow. It is not crushing, but it is enough to send the lad reeling to the gutter. We rush forward to help and soothe the victim of such brutality, when the man seems to recover his senses somewhat; and, with some muttered words of shamefaced apology, walks on, his child following in fear and suppressed tears.

With a sympathetic sigh we continue our walk, when the noisy brawling at the next "public" attracts us. Here is more child sacrifice. Outside the door stands a frail girl, every now and then wiping her eyes. "What is the matter, my dear?" we question, at which the tears flow fast; but with a brave effort she controls her voice and tells her story. A simple but a sad one it is. The diminutive maiden has lately gone out to work, and early in the day she brought home her wages. With them her mother promised to buy her a pair of boots—sore needed, we notice, as she lifts up and points to a dilapidated woman's boot, utterly unfit for bad weather Instead of making the purchase, the "mother" has gone to the public-house, and is now squandering the child's hard-earned money! As we are talking the woman appears, and, strange to say, accepts our carefully chosen counsel to her and walks off with the girl, promising to do her duty.

Much rejoiced, we pass on. Yet we have not gone far before we meet with another illustration of Drink's cruelty to the little ones. Just in front of us is what appears to be an exceedingly tall—almost colossal man. Our curiosity is piqued and we draw near. We have to be careful, for as we approach him he staggers across the pavement recklessly. We look up, and, to our horror, there is a little child of about four perched on his tall, broad shoulders. The mite is clinging for very life to his foolish father's head, intense fear in his eyes, while again and again he utters a cry of painful anxiety as his bearer sways from side to side. The man is in a semi-humorous, excited state from drink, and in a would-be jocular mood has hoisted his child to his shoulders as a possible "treat"! Suddenly the man stumbles, falling sideways towards us, and with a heart-rending shriek the poor child is thrown to the ground. To run forward and pick up the tiny fellow is the work of a moment, when we observe a serious cut on his forehead. Fortunately we have a little court plaister at hand, and at once tend the wound. Of course, the father is now sobered, and with an earnest appeal to him and a kind word to the child, we leave them to gain their home.

So the evening may thus be passed in watching the terrible child tribute to this drink god, Bacchus. What we have witnessed has been outside, in the streets. If we step inside the gin-palaces and "publics" we shall see the same awful evils inflicted on innocent childhood, although in another form.

Look at this dirty creature actually putting to the lips of a mere infant in arms a glass of steaming gin-and-water! Over there is a man offering the dregs of a pewter pot to the laddie who has entered with him! Away in that corner is a little one listening open-mouthed to the swearing and profanity of its elders, and at an hour when every child of tender age should be asleep!

But need we continue our inspection? I think not. What we have seen already is surely enough to stir any true mother's heart to deepest pity.

Can anything be done for these helpless little ones?

I leave the burning question to every mother who reads these words.

May we each pray that God will speedily arise to stay this terrible "massacre of the innocents," as well as do our part by helping those who labour to save the tempted parents and maltreated children of London's huge city!

R.

AFTER MANY DAYS.

MORE than a quarter of a century ago, a Christian woman conceived the idea that she might perhaps be able to do some good in the world by gathering into her own parlour, for religious teaching, on Sunday afternoons, several of the neighbours' children, who for various reasons were not in the habit of attending any Sabbath school.

The invitations she subsequently issued were readily responded to, and as a beginning, a group of three or four young people assembled with her own small daughter for several successive Sundays to read and learn from God's holy Word.

All were orderly and attentive but one—a mischievous puss whom we will call Katie. This little girl, who, though naturally of a good disposition, was comparatively undisciplined and bubbling over with fun, took advantage of her greater familiarity with the teacher and her house—being a frequent visitor and companion to the teacher's own child—to upset the class with her ill-timed sallies of mirth.

In vain the lady sought to influence and restrain her. Katie seemed irrepressible. In the midst of the most serious subject she would, by some comical word or look, provoke all the others to giggle, and every effort made—perhaps not in the wisest way—to show her the naughtiness of such conduct, failed to produce any change.

At length the teacher, who possibly did not possess the essential characteristics of patience and perseverance in a sufficiently marked degree, gave up her little class in despair, for she thought that under the circumstances she could be doing no good, reflecting regretfully ever after that it was "all because of Katie."

Years passed away—twenty, nearly thirty. The unsuccessful teacher and her daughter never lost sight of Katie, and although they did not meet her very often or know her intimately enough to interchange any ideas upon religious subjects, they heard that she had become a communicant and a church worker.

A short time ago, the daughter received from her former playmate a letter containing the following words: "I often feel how much I have to be thankful for, and looking back to my early childhood I always gratefully acknowledge that it was your dear mother who first (by her gifts of good little books and her words to me) put my steps into the right road. At home, as you know, I heard but little of religion, and I often thank God that He placed such a friend by my side in the early part of my life. I know that it will be a comfort to your mother in her declining days to know that her words were not in vain."

Katie is now bringing up a family of children to love and serve God. What a bounteous harvest from a little seed! If weak and soon discouraged efforts were so grandly over-paid, how can we tell what the reward of patient, persevering labour in that tiny field might not have been?

JACEY.

THE CHILDREN'S ROOM.

HOW peacefully at night
The sleeping children lie,
Each gentle breath so light
Escaping like a sigh!
How tranquil seems the room, how fair
To one who softly enters there!

Whose hands are those unseen,
That smooth each little bed?
Whose locks are those that lean
Over each pillowed head?
Whose lips caress the boys and girls?
Whose fingers stroke the golden curls?

Whose are the yearning eyes,
And whose the trembling tear?
Whose heart is this that cries,
Beseeching God to hear?
Whose but the Mother's, in whose face
Love shows its sweetest dwelling-place.

Here hopes in beauty bloom,
And Heaven sends down its light,
Which lingers in the room
Where Mother says, "Good-night."
Soft treading by the sleepers there,
Her very presence seems a prayer!

Helps for Busy Housewives.

KETTLE AND SAUCEPAN HOLDERS should be in every kitchen, otherwise kitchen-cloths and tea-cloths will be used, and consequently spoilt. A careful housewife will also endeavour constantly to add some few pieces of linen to her stock, as, if the table-cloths, sheets, etc., all become worn out at once, they are very expensive to renew in numbers.

Cold on the Chest.—A piece of flannel wrung out in boiling water, sprinkled with turpentine, and laid on the chest, gives great relief.

When Bathing Baby, try the following suggestion for an apron: One yard of heavy white flannel. Make a half-inch hem on the sides, and a three-inch hem at the bottom. Cross-stitch the top of hems with white rope silk. Turn a hem at the top an inch-and-a-half deep and sew neatly with fine cotton. Through this hem run two yards of white moiré ribbon. A semi-circular motto may be outlined in white rope silk, above the hem, with the following words: "When the bath is over, this is baby's cover."

A Simple Emetic.—In cases of poisoning and similar mishaps, one table-spoonful of mustard in half-a-pint of warm water will be found a good emetic.

Straw and Basket Work can be thoroughly cleaned with salt-and-water. It should be applied with a nail-brush, and the article quickly dried.

Habitual Constipation.—A glass of water taken early in the morning has been found efficacious in curing this troublesome ailment.

Avoid Coddling.—Merely warm the back by the fire, and never continue keeping the back exposed to the heat after it has become comfortably warm. To do so is debilitating.

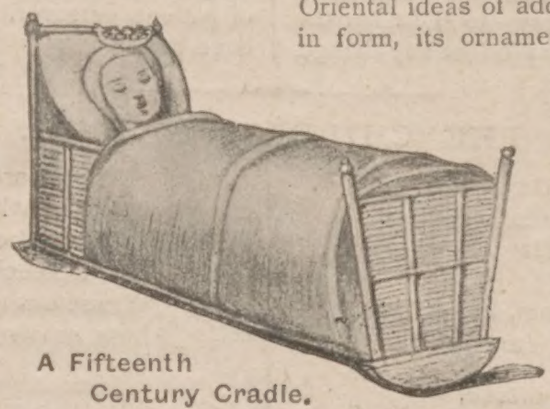
FAMOUS CRADLES OF LONG AGO.

BY BEATRICE H. ARDEN.

Cradle of William I. of Germany.

WHAT a sweet maternal interest centres around the family cradle! Whether in the home of the rich or of the poor, that unpretentious receptacle which sheltered the rising generation in earliest days, is usually treasured with affectionate remembrance. And well it may be, for hallowed are the memories of love and devotion, of heart-felt tears and joy, which it enshrines.

Probably, in these days of "cheap furnishing," the exalted position of the cradle has severely suffered. Hence the charm there is in looking back at the quaint and curious articles which were rocked and guarded over by the mothers of bygone times. A number of such old-time cradles still remain, and doubtless many a modern mother will be delighted to take a peep at some of them here.



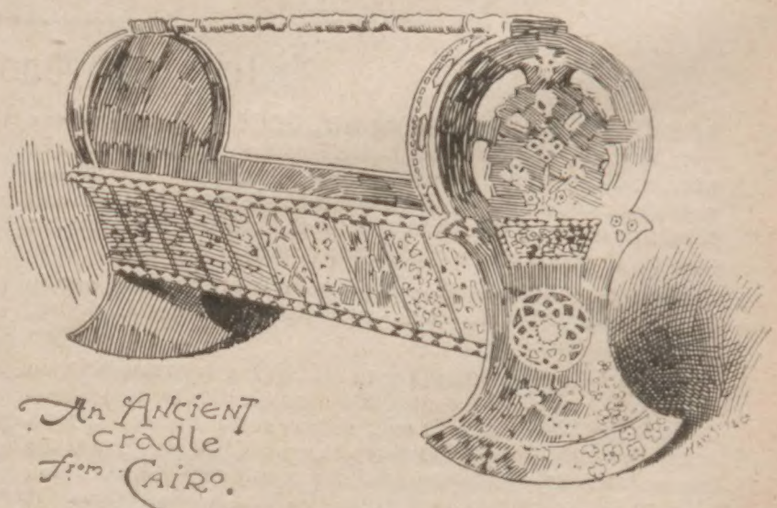
A Fifteenth Century Cradle.

Of course, the costly and artistic cradle of "the high-born ladye" was attained only after long efforts to embody the beautiful. The very earliest specimens, even for royal infants, were crude and clumsy. A mere log of wood hollowed out and smoothed on the outside constituted the first *berceau* for baby. Then art lent its aid, and carving added its share of beauty. By-and-by upholstery was indulged in, and both material and needlework transformed the rude cot into a luxurious place of rest. This may be clearly seen in the peculiar cradle of William the First of Germany. Here the cradle itself is supported by four posts, and is a tasteful arrangement of cloth and frilling and sewing. It can open entirely when the little one is awake, or be partly shut up when sleeping-time arrives. Beneath is a kind of bureau in fine cabinet work, with drawers in which may be stored infantile garments. The whole forms a most useful article; while I may mention that it was discovered several years ago by an inquisitive tourist who was staying in a remote village of the Alps.

But I must not yet dwell on cradles near our own day. Let us go back and look at the articles of earlier times. In the second illustration is to be seen a typical cradle of the fifteenth century; it was drawn from a picture showing domestic furniture of the period, so that it is veritably accurate. At the first glance one can see that it is a royal cradle by the crown adorning the little sleeper's head. But how simple is the affair! It is composed of the commonest kind of small sticks, held together by a strong framework. It has not the slightest sign of ornamentation, if we exclude the mere knobs capping its four corner-posts. Rockers are provided, and the coverings are secured to the cradle itself—probably by means of holes near the bottom, through which the necessary straps were fastened. By the way, rocking the cradle was held to be a serious business in earlier times, for we read that special persons were appointed to the task. They were often ladies of title, and, besides "rocking," they undertook to taste all food prepared for their charges, in case of poison; while they were held to be a royal infant's defender, for in turbulent times it was not an unheard-of thing for an heir to a throne to be purloined, or even dispatched by an assassin's hand.

Turning to the East, it is somewhat curious to find, in view of the relatively scant care of children which obtains there, that the cradle has been an object for thought and skilful workmanship. At South Kensington Museum in London is exhibited a very fine example. It has all the peculiar appearance characteristic of the Oriental ideas of adornment. Yet simple as it may be in form, its ornamentation makes it a real "thing of beauty."

The whole of the outside is adorned with a series of subdued designs in inlaid mother-of-pearl, and the effect is quite as charming as might be obtained by any amount of drapery. The time taken to produce such an article, and the cost of it, must have been great, for even the rail running from head to foot is carved and embellished most artistically. This ancient cradle was brought from Cairo, but for whom it was made is a mystery. Probably it was designed by order of some potentate who could command the highest skill and materials for whatever he might desire. At any



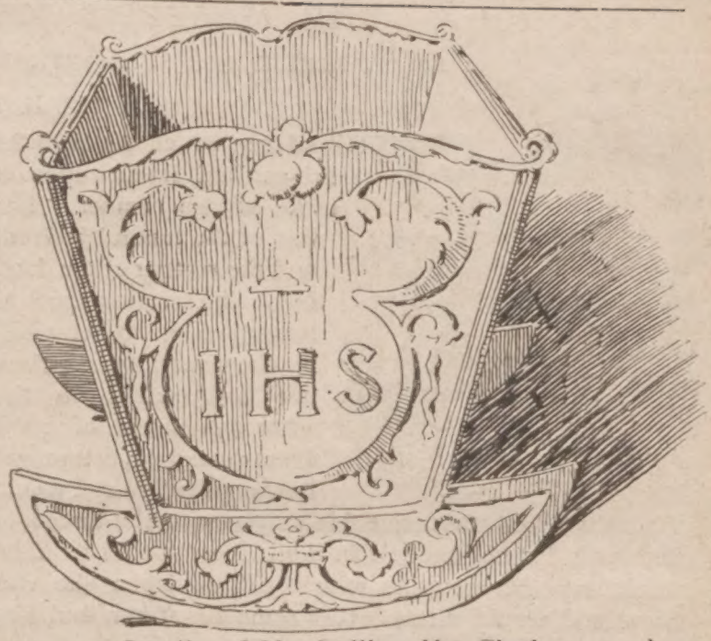
An Ancient Cradle from Cairo.

rate, it is pleasing to think that for a little time his mind was diverted from incessant war and the intrigues of an Eastern court to take interest in such a pretty article for the royal household.

Our next cradle is one of much historic interest, although far from striking in appearance. Except for the carving, one might take it to have been the sleeping-place of some merchant's babe of past days. Or possibly it belonged to someone connected with the Church, seeing that it bears the ecclesiastical monogram, "I. H. S." (Jesus, Saviour of Men). Not that these symbolic letters are extremely rare, for children's cribs for a long time bore them—a beautiful idea, surely, linking the helplessness of babyhood with the Divine compassion of our Lord for "the little ones." But no plebeian cradle was this. No less a personage than the famous German emperor, Maximilian I., occupied it in infancy. Though he wrote his own biography, it is certain that to his nurses we should have to look to learn whether his infant days and nights were as stormy as his later years. He it was who presided at the renowned Diet of Worms in 1496, when Luther fought the battle of religious liberty. Twice was he married, his first matrimonial alliance bringing him a kingdom for a dowry, and his second wife involving him in disastrous wars against her own people.

Cradle of the King of Rome.

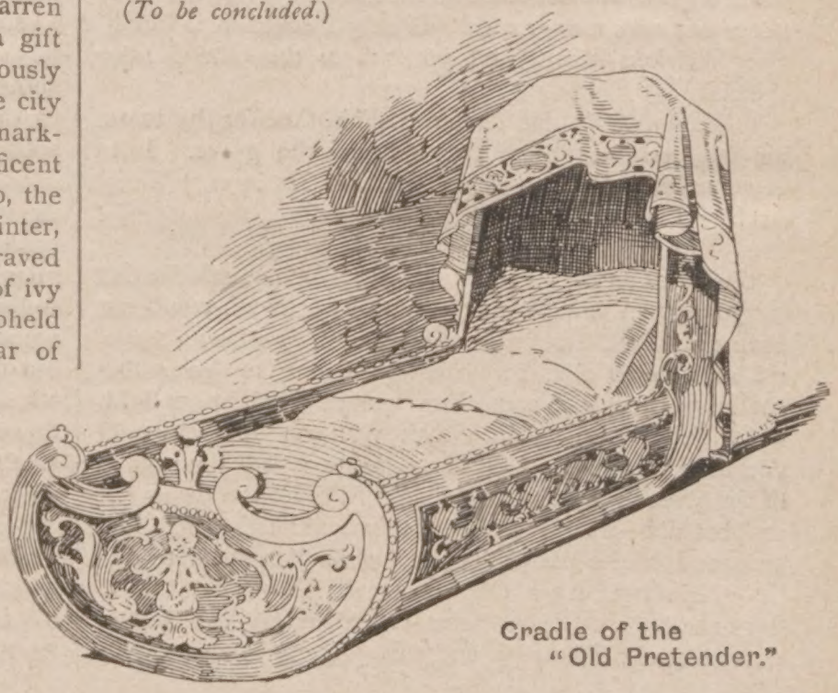
Strange as it may seem, even within recent years it has been customary for cities and persons of note to present to the reigning king or queen a cradle for the heir-apparent. As may be imagined, these presents were magnificent and very costly. The one sent from India by Warren Hastings as a gift to Queen Charlotte was richly jewelled and luxuriously lined. And at the time of Napoleon Bonaparte the city of Paris united in presenting to his Empress a remarkable cradle. We are informed that "it was a magnificent piece of work, in silver gilt, representing a ship, the emblem of the capital, and designed by the painter, Prudhon. The monogram of the Emperor was engraved upon a shield at the top, surrounded by a wreath of ivy leaves and laurels; a small figure of Glory upheld a crown, in the midst of which shone the star of Napoleon, gazed at by a young eagle with half-expanded wings placed at the foot. The cradle was emblematic of the future glory of the unconscious King of Rome, whose birth excited a tumult of enthusiasm; whose death passed well-nigh unnoticed." This wonderful cradle, weighing five hundredweight, was presented by him to the Imperial Treasury at Vienna. Another cradle used for this royal personage is here illustrated. It is an equally beautiful work. Design, ornamentation, and upholstery are all superb, fittingly terminated by the artistic figure of an angel of peace lightly standing on a globe placed at the head.



Cradle of Maximilian the First.

Coming back to our own country, although we have no such elaborate cradles as those of the French, many fine specimens remain. For sumptuous wood-carving, the cradle once belonging to the Earl of Derwentwater can scarcely be equalled. But space compels me to leave to another occasion a notice of them, so I shall draw our survey now to a close by a glance at the cradle used for the "Old Pretender." As a matter of fact, when an infant this hapless son of James II. occupied distinct cradles in two countries; for his mother, Beatrice of Modena, fled with him to France. Our illustration shows the one indicative of the tiny occupant being the Prince of Wales, as seen in the triple ostrich feathers at the foot. The cradle itself was beautifully embroidered in gold and silver, and was altogether a dainty resting-place. Yet how many a child of obscure parents has enjoyed a far more peaceful life than this harassed aspirant to a throne!

(To be concluded.)



Cradle of the "Old Pretender."

THE MASTER'S MESSAGES TO WOMEN.

BY CHARLOTTE SKINNER, AUTHOR OF "MY HAPPY POSSESSIONS," ETC.

TO THE BEREAVED WOMAN.

THE silence which death alone brings had fallen upon a little village home. The day of the funeral arrived, and the mother of the dead boy, with no husband to lean upon, no other child to cheer her, went out on her sad errand, in the utter loneliness of grief. It was a sad departure, yet how much more sad would the return be—to notice his empty seat, the traces of his work, his old sandals in the corner yonder! Who would run her errands now? Who, when she was depressed, would throw loving arms about her, and kiss away her tears? Poor lonely mother!

And yet, after all, she came back with a song on her lips, and never did the birds seem to be so merry, nor the sunbeams so bright! O happy, happy mother! Well might thy lips overflow with song, for One "who is mighty to save" had met thee, pitied thee, spoken to thee, and—O wondrous triumph!—had snatched from death its prey, and given thee back thy boy! The colour had come again to his lips, strength to his limbs, and he—the once dead boy—had even walked back home with her!

"Weep not!" Never had her ears heard a sweeter sound; and we can well imagine how, as the years went by, they never lost their music.

"Weep not!" and this is what the Master gently whispers still.

"Ah!" says some crushed soul, "she might well cease to weep, for she got her child back again, but my child has not been given back to me! And, oh, the silent loneliness! Sometimes on a dark night I go to the garden gate, and in a low voice I call his name—softly for fear the neighbours should think I am mad. Then I grow bolder, and call more loudly, but his voice never answers me—*never*. If only I could hear him!" Poor stricken heart! and yet it *is* to thee the Master speaks.

"*Weep not!*" He does not chide thee for thy tears, for He, too, wept by the side of the grave. It is because He wishes to cheer thee that He says, "Weep not!" Listen!

"WEEP NOT."

God is wiser than we are. Had it been God's will for your loved one to remain with you, death could not have prevailed. But suppose God sent you this message, "The time is ripe for your loved one to leave this shadowy earth and come into heaven's bright sunlight, but if you like to call him back you can do so," would you dare to do it? You know the story of the raising of the woman of Shunem's child. Would you do as the prophet did—put your warm body against the cold one, breathe into the pallid lips, and wake him again to this life of sin and care? Oh, you would never do it! You dare not do it! Your heart would cry out, "God is wiser than I; His ways and thoughts are above mine." And if you never truly said the words before, you would say them then, "He knoweth best."

"WEEP NOT."

Your loved one still lives. How often on a dark, stormy night the heart of the bereaved woman aches with an unutterable anguish as the thoughts go out to the lonely grave, and each blast of wind and rush of rain makes the pain more intense! Why? Because it is difficult to realise that the form we loved so well was only the shell, and that the soddened grass and cold, wet clay only cover that shell, not the immortal spirit.

Death is not one long sleep of those we love till the Resurrection morning; it is the bursting of the soul's barriers. "For we know that if our earthly tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands." Our loved ones are *above*, not beneath; not dead, but alive with a life fuller and wider than earthly existence ever knew.

"WEEP NOT!"

Your loved one is safe. How many a door is locked at night, and the mother retires, not to sleep, but to weep and pray, for out in the darkness her child or husband is wandering she knows not where! *Your lamb is safely folded.* How many a mother, filled with shame and disappointment, has cried out, "Oh, that I could wash away that foul stain on my child's life!" And as the iron enters more deeply into her soul, her cry is, "Would that I had buried him when an innocent child!" *Your* child is pure and safe. Life is full of pit-falls, temptations are ever about us, none can tell who will be the next to fall. But inside the golden gate "nothing entereth that defileth," and safe indeed are they who rest for ever in the light of the Father's smile.

"WEEP NOT."

Your loved one is well cared for. When the children are sent away to school the mother wonders if they will be well looked after, and if the husband is away on a journey she wonders if he will get comfortable hotels to stay at. It is the mother-love that packs the schoolboy's box, the picnic basket, and the portmanteau. And should the message come, "Ill," how quickly she hastens to the bedside! no hand but hers must soothe. Like soft, spreading, sheltering, nestling wings is her loving care. And we glory in thus caring for our loved ones, do we not? But when our birdies flee away on immortal wings, we miss our work, and wonder if they miss our care! But let us remember our shortcomings—the many mistakes we have made through our ignorance—and deem not that we have been perfect in our ministrations. He who so wonderfully holds the stars in His hands, and paints the petals of the roadside flower, with Whom nothing is too great and nothing too small, has our loved ones in His keeping, and they dwell where nothing "hurts."

"WEEP NOT!"

Your loved one occupies a high position. To so many death brings such bitter disappointments; such high hopes had been raised—such glorious plans arranged. And then they were all spoilt! But think you that this

life is the only sphere in which the powers of your loved one could be developed? Have you not often watched a child raising a hillock on the sea-shore, and, when it has been finished, he has stood with glee on the top, and clapped his little hands? But then the tide came in, the hillock disappeared, and the child returned to the cliffs; and presently he appears on the highest point, and how far he can see now! Your child in the body is the child on the hillock; your child up yonder is the child on the cliff, whom no tide can reach, with wider views, greater possibilities. Would you wish him back again?

"WEEP NOT!"

Your child is still your own. The thought of the high position he now occupies, the grand missions he may be taking part in, his fair, noble surroundings, the splendid company he mingles amongst—at times may send a chill to the heart, and you may sigh, "Does he still remember me? Is he still mine? Is there any link left which binds us?" And the temptation may come, "Oh, for the little laddie back again, that was all our own!

Had he lived, would he have continued all your own? Sin and pride might have crept into his heart, and driven him far from you. Is he not, up yonder, *more* yours than if he had remained here? For there all good remains, grows rather than diminishes, and he who first created the love between mother and child—between soul and soul—will never suffer it to die, but rather bid it increase. Think of the gentle words of the Master to the sorrowing sister, "*Your brother* shall rise again"—still yours, for true love can never die; in that purer clime disloyalty could never enter.

"WEEP NOT!"

We shall meet our loved again. The thought of our loved one's safety and eminence does not do away with our loneliness. There is still the aching silence, though we have learnt not to wish him back. What can break this silence, what fill the loneliness? Is there anything? YES, and spirit voices echo back, "YES." Hope's glad song breaks the silence, and Faith takes the sting from loneliness. 'Tis only for a little while, and then the happy meeting. Only a few more starlit hours, and then the glorious dawn of heaven! "And shall I know him again?" still sighs the anxious heart. Would it be possible for you not to know him? Is there any hint in our heavenly Guide-Book to lead you to doubt this? Could you suppose that our Father, who is the God of love, would ever deny you this intense pleasure in the land where all is joy?

O my sad heart, so often rent with grief, canst thou not patiently wait till the glad meeting time? Shall I not, in response to my Master's message, cease my weeping, and lift up to Him a smiling face?

NOVEL NOTIONS.

A NEW BED-REST.

A BED-REST for invalids, especially for the convalescent in cases of heart disease and dropsy, is shown in the figure, and will explain itself. It is constructed of light wood, the back is curved, and can be inclined to any angle to suit the patient by shifting the hinged props along the rack. There are brass buttons round the back to secure the pillows, if need be, by strong tapes provided for the purpose, and the wood can be carbolised to keep it wholesome.

SILK FROM WOOD.

Silk is now manufactured from wood at Besançon, in France. The process was first shown at the Paris Exhibition of 1889; but since then it has been much improved by the inventor, M. de Chardonnet. The wood is reduced to pulp, like that employed in making satin-paper, then dried in an oven, and afterwards plunged into a mixture of sulphuric and nitric acids, then washed in several water baths, and dried by means of alcohol. The product is dissolved in ether and alcohol, and the resulting collodion is purified in a filter, then drawn through a die into fibres, which are washed in water, and when dry resemble ordinary silk. To render this artificial silk uninflammable, it is passed through a solution of ammonia.

MILK AND LIQUID OXYGEN.

A practical use for liquefied oxygen has been found in sterilising milk. The late Paul Bert, the well-known French *savant* and statesman, who lost his life while on a political mission in Tonquin, was the first to show that oxygen prevents the souring of milk—that is to say, its fermentation—by destroying the germs, or "vibrions," which produce it; and M. Villon has applied liquid oxygen to the purpose. Tubes of the liquefied gas are now on sale in France for mixing with milk in order to preserve it.

A STRAINING LID FOR SAUCEPANS.

The accompanying figure shows a new lid for saucepans, which allows of the gravy or water being all strained away without the lid being lifted. The flap of the lid is raised, and the liquid simply poured out through the strainer, while the solid contents are kept back. An ingenious and practical idea.

*** Readers wishing for further information about these Novel Notions are invited to write to the Editor at 9, Paternoster Row, London, E.C., enclosing a stamped envelope for reply.

ON SAYING "YES."

I THINK there are parents who might say "yes" to their children much more frequently than they do. It is very touching to see a family of children who are planning for themselves some little treat or pleasure, select the youngest because he is the pet or the one whom they suppose to be for some reason the most in favour, to go and ask father or mother, as the case may be, for the coveted permission; as if father and mother were two dread tyrants who must be approached with the utmost tact and discretion, and taken in a genial mood, or the little petitioners would not attain the desired boon.

Many a time I myself have been approached by some small friend and requested to "Ask mother for me; she will do it for you, I know, but she would say no at once to me." And I, feeling that this would probably be the case, have exercised whatever tact I possessed with the mother, and when I have won the coveted permission I have gone with the happy sentence, "Yes, mother says you can do it," to gladden the heart of the little petitioner waiting without.

Surely this is all wrong. It is true that a wise mother is obliged during the course of a day to refuse more than she is able to grant, but every child ought to have an assured confidence that these refusals are the result of no tyranny or caprice, but that they are all given in a spirit of perfect kindness and truest love. Often a busy mother has no time to explain her reasons for a refusal, and sometimes it is best not to explain; in either case the child must accept the decision, and he will do it cheerfully if he is absolutely sure that mother would gladly say "Yes" if she could. That is just the trouble. Why should Polly wear the blue frock instead of the red one? Why must Jack's new hat be a hard straw when he wants a soft felt? Why will you make seed-cake when the children prefer the currant variety? Why cannot their tastes, ideas, and preferences be suited when it would do no harm? Many people seem to think that the proper way to bring up a child is to cross it as much as possible.

Sometimes it is an excellent plan to allow a child t have its own way even when you know the result will not be in accord with the best judgment. A young girl of my acquaintance went once with her mother to purchase a pair of gloves. She selected a pair which were of a delicate dove colour, while her mother thought it best that she should have brown.

"Mother," said the girl, "I do want the dove-coloured ones very much."

"It is true," answered the mother, "that they are prettier, but they will not be so durable."

"Mother, do you say that I *must* have the brown?"

"Oh, no," replied the mother. "I wish you to use your own judgment; only remember, if you buy the dove-coloured ones, that they will soil easily, and yet you must wear them as long as you would if they were brown, for I cannot afford to get you an extra pair."

"Mother," said the girl, "I will be very careful of them, and they are so very pretty that I think I must have them." So they were bought, and the happy girl went home with her treasure, but of course they soon grew soiled and shabby. Still Bertha bravely wore them until they were worn out.

"Mother," said she when at last she had another pair, "you were right, and I was wrong about those old dove-coloured things. Your judgment was better than mine, and you were so nice about it. You did not scold me a bit, or say 'I told you so' once, but I have learned my lesson. I never will be so silly again."

"That is all I want, my child," answered her mother, smiling.

Fathers and mothers, say "yes" whenever you consistently can. The day will surely come when it will be out of your power to make your children happy any more.

J. G.

CORNELIA'S JEWELS.

BY J. R. EASTWOOD.

*** It is related of the virtuous Cornelia, mother of Tiberius and Caius Gracchus, that when visited by a Campanian lady, who made a display of her jewels, entreating Cornelia to favour her with a sight of her own, she produced her two boys, saying, "These are the only jewels of which I can boast." The subsequent career of these youths, as wise and upright tribunes, sheds a lustre on the page of history. A statue was erected in Rome during the lifetime of this noble woman, with this inscription: "To Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi."

WHEN the proud Campanian dame
To the Roman matron came,
And with boasting showed to her
All her jewels rich and rare—
Asked Cornelia to behold
All the necklaces of gold,
Diamonds blazing through a mist
Dim with pearl and amethyst,
Fair tiaras set with gems
Queens might wear for diadems,
Rings and bracelets flashing bright
With their stars of changing light—
Said with pride, "Lo, these are mine!
Pray, Cornelia, show me thine"—

With a sweet and tranquil grace,
Rising calmly from her place,
Pure, and beautiful, and good,
In her pride of motherhood,
She, whose statue in old Rome
Taught the sanctities of home,
All the simple household joys,
Summoned to her side her boys,
Two bright youths, erect and fair!
Then, to that petitioner,
With a hand on either head,
"These are mine!" Cornelia said,
"I can boast of none beside,
These my jewels—and my pride!

"'These my jewels—and my pride.'" p. 28.

English mothers of to-day,
What of your fair jewels, pray?
Souls unsullied, pure, and white,
As the gems of shining light,
Sent in love and mercy down,
Born, to deck the Saviour's crown—
Jewels, for a little space
Beaming here with joy and grace,
Bringing light where all is dim,
Precious jewels, dear to Him—
Here, in life's uncertain way,
Guard them, lest they go astray!
Guard these jewels God has given,
Strive to make them meet for heaven!

A NEEDLESS SACRIFICE.

BY MARGARET E. SANGSTER.

THERE are sacrifices enough in this world, sacrifices which must be made and which, involve what suffering they may, yet bring in their sweet following "afterward" a recompense of reward. But, also, there are sacrifices—some larger, some smaller—which women offer up on various altars, and they amount in the end only to heart-ache and disappointment, having done nothing by way of good to anybody concerned. I sometimes think that we women need to be warned over and over against our constitutional tendency to unnecessary and uncalled-for sacrifice. Not long ago I heard of a case in point. It is only one of many, but as an illustration it will serve my purpose here.

Away in a secluded country village a sweet girl lived in the home she and her mother shared with her two bachelor uncles and her grandmother. The family were well-to-do, with ample fields and well-stocked barns. Every one was in perfect health, there was no cloud of any sort on the domestic horizon, when one bright day the thing that happens in most young lives happened in Mary's. A young man, suitable in age, social position, and Christian character, fell in love with her, courted her assiduously, and received her promise to be his wife.

Thus far no obstacle had intervened to prevent the two lives, which had apparently grown up from child-hood to complement each other, from uniting and fulfilling their destiny. An unexpected one was presently raised in the opposition of the mother and one of the uncles to the wedding, an opposition as unreasonable as it was surprising.

"There is no occasion for Mary to marry for several years," said the mother. "She is well situated as she is, and her life is so easy and so sheltered that I cannot consent to her undertaking one which will probably be harder."

"She is the only young creature about the house," added Uncle Ben, "and we cannot spare her. Besides, her marriage would entail a good deal of extra expense. Her mother would have to keep a servant if Mary went away, while Mary and she get on smoothly together. The thing is not to be thought of for a long time. Of course, the young people may be engaged if they choose."

Selfish as these special pleadings were, they sufficed to induce the delay of Mary's marriage to John for twelve long years. Each remained faithful to the other, but Mary's old people steadily grew older and more "set" in their ways. Mary herself lost much of her girlish charm. John gradually hardened and became cynical and morose, and the freshness and spontaneity of the early love were dissipated in the long strain of the slow and disappointing course of a foolishly protracted betrothal.

It came to pass that one day last summer John paid a visit to Mary, and walked up the path to the door with the step of a man who had arrived at a resolution not to be trifled with. Mary was, as usual, busy about her work. The old grandmother sat at the window knitting as she had been knitting, probably, when John's first wooing began. I don't know where the mother was nor the uncles at the moment, but John wasted no words.

"Take me or leave me, Mary," he said. "Either promise here and now that you will marry me within a month from this day, or give me up for ever."

The look in his face was like the glow in a smouldering furnace. Mary hesitated.

"Mother—" she began.

"It has come to this," interrupted John, firmly, "that you must choose between your mother and your husband. It's take me or leave me—to-day."

"Mary?"

It was the grandmother who spoke, her voice quivering and high pitched, but earnest and still sweet in its cadence.

"Mary, John has the right of it. Let him have his way. I never approved of this putting him off, myself, and I wish he hadn't stood it so long. It's been a sacrifice that nobody's ever appreciated, the whole of it."

And Mary agreed. What fulness of blessing may still be for her and for John remains to be seen, but this is evident—they have lost the first beautiful springtime of their days, they have known the taste of hope deferred, they have done in haste and without dignity that which should have been worthily and appropriately done years ago. The beautiful bridal, the gradual adaptation of the two young hearts to one another, the place of the new family in the community, were sacrificed, one and all, to caprice and avarice.

Long engagements are often inevitable. On the one hand the prospective husband may have kindred dependent upon him, or an inheritance of debts which must be paid, or his way to make in the world. The future wife may not throw aside a duty to an ailing mother, or to younger brothers and sisters whom she must educate. Circumstances are sometimes relentless. As a rule, however, unnecessarily and unreasonably long engagements are a great mistake, and when due to the feminine disposition to indulge in needless sacrifice they are almost criminal.

A Cat's Patience.—Have you ever noticed a cat with kittens? The cat will not eat till the kittens have been satisfied. I have often looked in wonder at a cat of my acquaintance, which would even retire from the dish if the vessel had been set down and she had commenced to eat in the absence of the kitten. She would retire in favour of the kitten when it came running to assert its claim, and sit quietly by, looking on demurely till the kitten had had its fill; and then the patience with which she would endure the playful onsets of the kitten on tail and head while she was engaged in lapping up the morsels that had been left was truly a fine show of native courtesy. Under annoyance such as few human beings would in the circumstances have borne with equanimity, she would raise her head and give the kitten a loving lick or two.—*Prof. Japp.*

* * * *

Mother does the most and gets the least pay.

From the mother's pulpit is preached the shortest sermons, but they do the most good.

A mother's love in the home is what sunshine is to the earth.

MOTHERS IN COUNCIL.

CONDUCTED BY MRS. E. M. WATERWORTH, AUTHOR OF "MOTHERS AT HOME," ETC.

February 1st, 1896.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,—I don't get many letters from men, so I think I ought to answer my masculine correspondent first. "ARTHUR" writes to me from an out-of-the-way place in Wisconsin, North America, and gives but a sorry description of his home life. Owing to money difficulties he is obliged to make his home with his wife under his father-in-law's roof, or to live alone in his little shanty, which stands in ten acres of ground covered with timber and stones. The former life he finds nearly unbearable; "there is very little love in the house, and even common courtesy is almost a stranger. The worst of it is that I am getting so impatient and fretful that I am the cause of the trouble a good many times. I want to have things my own way a little too much, and so does my wife. I feel decidedly dull when living alone like a hermit, and yet I am happier when alone."

As I read "ARTHUR'S" letter I thought that a good many of us could say, "Quite true" to each of those sentences; so as "ARTHUR" lives in another hemisphere I hope he won't mind my making his grumble public. Now, it strikes me there's a gleam of hope for "ARTHUR"; he knows the disease he is suffering from. When once a man or woman has the courage to own to him or herself, "I have sinned," then there is hope of cure. It is the people who bury themselves in their self-righteousness, and blame every one in the world but themselves, who will live and die and never realise that they have marred their own lives. Be patient, "ARTHUR." The way seems weary and long, but the end will come the moment your work is done. Put your shoulder to the wheel like a man. Fight against that temper of yours; keep your best manners for your home, as you keep your best coat for Sunday. Possibly some physical failing may be partly responsible for your impatience. It is hard to be gentle and courteous when you feel as if your brains were being broiled, or your nerves were being touched by every sound. It is hard, but, thank God, it is not impossible. Try again, "ARTHUR," and remember Who has said, "My grace is sufficient for thee." We want more faith in His power, more distrust of our own. Go on, seek first God's help in your home life, and He will give it to you in everything else, even, perhaps, in the obtaining those thirty pounds which you say are necessary to make your shanty a comfortable home.

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"THOMASINA" (why didn't you say "poor pussy" at once?) has a pair of squeaky boots. Some clever author said once, "Man is an atom in the universe; let him walk up the aisle of a church after service has begun in a pair of squeaking boots and see if he feels like it." I only know of two remedies for squeaky soles. One is to stand them in water all night and then let them dry without the aid of the fire. The other is to open the sole at the side, put in a teaspoonful of French chalk, and get the cobbler to sew it up again.

OUR PUZZLE PARAGRAPH.

"MRS. SMITH" is anxious to get a place as housekeeper. She thought one old gentleman was going to engage her, when he suddenly asked, "What ought to be the weekly average consumption of butter, sugar, bread, tea, cheese, and meat per person?" "MRS. SMITH" could not answer. Will you do it for her, so that she may not lose another chance? A book valued at half-a-crown will be sent to the writer of the best answer, which will be published in these columns. Answers must be marked on the outside, "Puzzle Paragraph."

* * * *

"A B C" would like to know of a remedy for scurf in the head. For a wee baby, get a little cocoa-nut oil, rub it well on the spot at night, and wash with soap and water in the morning. The scurf will come off in flakes. For bigger children and their elders, get one ounce of quassia chips and put them in a teacupful of cold water. Let it stand a day before using, then rub it into the roots of the hair and brush well. This simple mixture applied once a week will prevent dandruff and things more unpleasant.

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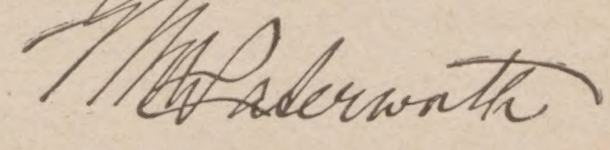
"SANDY" has been taken in by a London grocer, and wishes to know if there are any means of adulterating oatmeal, and of detecting the fraud when it is done. I hope this is a bona-fide question, and that "SANDY" doesn't want to use his knowledge the wrong way! Oatmeal can be adulterated with barley flour or with barley husks. If you weigh a cupful of pure oatmeal it will be heavier than the same quantity of the adulterated kind.

* * * *

Worms in the pot are the cause of many plants drooping, and if you cannot get rid of them, "MABEL," your favourite palm will die. Mix some moderately strong mustard and water and pour it over the mould. The worms won't like the mustard, so they will all scuttle to the surface, where they will find you waiting for them. Out of the frying-pan into the fire—do you see? I am afraid that *indoor* plants do not always get the care they need. Not only do they require air, light, and water, but the mould should be renewed on the first signs of its becoming low and exhausted.

* * * *

Certainly, "MATER," I agree with you. Teach the children from the very first to think of other people and to help others. Your girls are not too young to do a little needlework for some good purpose. Why do you not start a child's working party? You say your girls have two half-holidays a week. Could you not invite a few of their little friends to meet at your house once a week, and work for just one hour? You could read aloud some pretty book, and the children could make small garments. Thus they would learn to sew well, and would gradually grow to feel that, small as they are, they can do some good to others.



HINTS ON HOME DRESSMAKING.

BY A PRACTICAL DRESSMAKER.

OUT-DOOR garments must of necessity be uppermost in our consideration while the cold weather continues. Young ladies of slender figure look well in tight-fitting jackets with a full fluted basque. The sleeves of such jackets are often cut in the so-called melon shape, that is, with three or six parts marked out with flat pipings to imitate the divisions of a melon, and so allow room for the full dress sleeves. Esquimaux cloths and woollen reversibles are used for useful jackets and require no lining, some being piped down the seams with another colour, while others are trimmed with broad coloured braids.

Fig. 4.

We must also have a word to say about capes, which are still admired by young and old, and are worn either as a separate garment or to finish off jackets or pelisses. Those for elderly ladies are cut long and wide, and an extra warm lined vest is made to be worn with them, which will meet a felt need by those who wear capes. This vest is sleeveless, and can be cut with one side piece only, the loose edges of the front and side parts being joined under the arms and at the waist by elastic strips about an inch and a half wide. Cloth like the cape can be used, or anything suitable that may be lying by would answer, as the vest is very little seen, if at all. It should be lined with flannel or fur.

Silk rep is being used for mantles in place of matelassé cloth; it is weighty enough not to need a quilted lining, domette or flannel with an overlay of silk being sufficient, especially if a vest such as referred to above is worn with the mantle. Wide revers are used to ornament ladies' capes, the right one finishing in a scarf end, which reaches nearly to the bottom of the dress. Long mantles appear with very wide skirts, which are necessary when they are to be worn over a wide dress.

Fig. 5.

Fig. 4. We show here the bodice of a lady's dress, made with broad collar trimmings and full blouse or chemisette front of bengaline silk. It will be as well to cut the body with a short basque, so as to slip neatly under the skirt-band. The broad collars are edged with black and gold braid, and the fronts of the silk blouse are trimmed in a similar way with gold buttons down the centre. The collar parts should be lined with silk, stiff material being put between the stuff and lining to keep them in place. The bodice fastens down the centre of the blouse under a box-pleat, which is trimmed with braid and buttons as described. The skirt to be worn with this bodice should be trimmed round the edge with rows of black and gold braid, and the waist-band should correspond.

Fig. 6.

Fig. 5. Here is depicted a tweed mantle suitable for a girl from twelve to fourteen years of age. The under-part is made complete with sleeves and pockets, and can be double-breasted or fasten down the centre as desired. The pelerine is also complete, and can be worn separately. It consists of a circular cape with a square yoke cape over, and a turned-down collar finished at the neck with bows of ribbon. This mantle will not need lining, but the upper cape and collar should be lined with Italian cloth or silk, the edges being turned under and stitched with silk.

Fig. 6. This illustration shows a mantle suitable for a younger child. It is made of fine habit cloth of electric-blue shade, and should be lined throughout. The skirt is gathered and set into a velvet yoke, and the epaulettes are set in with the full leg-of-mutton sleeve. The trimming which edges the yoke epaulettes and collar can be of Krimmer or Thibet lamb fur. The latter is very pretty for children's wear, and can be washed when necessary by shaking it in warm soap and water, taking care that the skin does not get wet or it will dry hard and stiff.

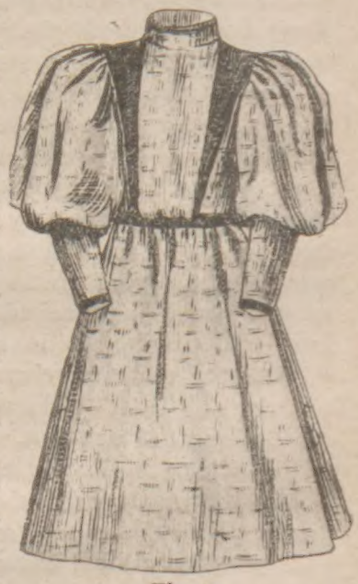


Fig. 7.

Fig. 7. This design will give a useful pattern for a girl's school dress. The skirt is gored and lined throughout, and the plain bodice is made on a fitting lining, the box-pleated front being put on separately and secured to the body under the neck-band, and at the waist revers of velvet are set on under the pleat and finished with a square collar at the back. Puff sleeves and cuffs, which fit tightly, finish the dress. Serge or cloth will be suitable material, and will be found to wear well.

Flat patterns can be supplied. Figs. 4, 5, 6, and 7, 6½d. each, post free. Address "M. C. Pattern," 9, Paternoster Row, London, E.C.